

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

# Usage guidelines

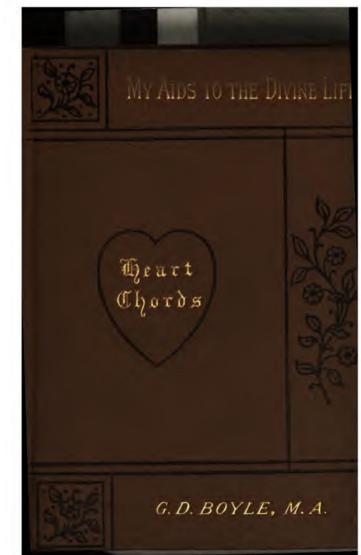
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + Refrain from automated querying Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

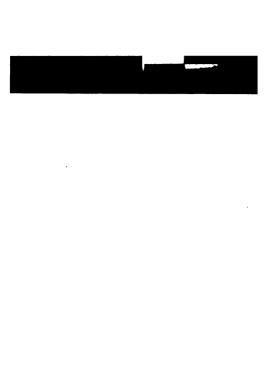
# **About Google Book Search**

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/











THE series of volumes of which this is one has for its object the stimulating, guiding, and strengthening of the Christian life.

It has been prepared, not to advocate the views of any special school of religious thought, nor to discuss any vexed questions, but rather to minister to all that is true, and strong, and manly in moral character.

Each volume will be brief, and will be divided into short chapters easily read by busy people, suitable for perusal at Morning and Evening Devotion, or for reading in the family circle, in the school, or the Bible class.

#### List of Volumes in the Series.

- MY WORK FOR GOD. By the Right Rev. Bishop COTTERILL.
- MY OBJECT IN LIFE. By the Ven. Archdeacon FARRAR.
- MY BIBLE. By the Rev. Canon BOYD CARPENTER.
- MY SOUL. By the Rev. P. B. POWER, M.A.
- MY HEREAFTER. By the Very Rev. Dean BICKER-STETH.
- MY FATHER'S HOUSE. By the Very Rev. Dean EDWARDS.
- MY WALK WITH GOD. By the Very Rev. Dean MONTGOMERY.
- MY ASPIRATIONS. By the Rev. GEO. MATHESON, D.D., of Innellan, and Baird Lecturer.
- MY BODY. By the Rev. Prof. W. G. BLAIKIE, D.D., Prof. in New College, Edinburgh,
- MY AIDS TO THE DIVINE LIFE. By the Very Rev. Dean BOYLE.
- MY GROWTH IN DIVINE LIFE. By the Rev. Prebendary REYNOLDS, M.A.
- MY EMOTIONAL LIFE. By the Rev. Prebendary CHADWICK, D.D.
- MY SOURCES OF STRENGTH. By the Rev. E. E. JENKINS, M.A., Secretary of Wesleyan Missionary Society, and Ex-President of the Conference.

# My Aids to the Divine Life.

BY THE

VERY REV. G. D. BOYLE, M.A.,

DEAN OF SALISBURY.

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED:

LONDON, PARIS & NEW YORK.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

1883.

141. n. 349.



# CONTENTS.

								PAGE	
		HAP							
The Strength of Praye	er	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	I
	CI	HAPT	ER	II.					
The Devout Study of	the	Bible	•	•	•	•	•	•	24
	CF	IAPT	ER	III.					
Meditation		•	•	•	•	•	٠	٠	44
•	CF	IAPI	ER	ıv.					
Self-Examination	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	51
	С	HAP	TER	v.					
Living by Rule .		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	60
	CI	HAP	rer	VI.					
The Study of the Live	es o	f Emi	nent	Saint	<b>.</b>	•	•	•	68
	CF	IAPT	ER	VII					
The Holy Communio	n								6,



# MY AIDS TO THE DIVINE LIFE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE STRENGTH OF PRAYER.

"I ADMIT that there is such a thing as the Divine Life in the soul of man," said an enquirer to the author of many books which have been helpful to seekers after truth; "but how can I sustain it? what are my aids to the Divine Life?" "I can give you no other advice than to use humbly the aids which are the portion of learned and unlearned, of high and low, of rich and poor—the aids which have been helpful to the Monicas, and Saint Theresas, the Pascals and Fenelons, the Taulers and Luthers, the Wesleys

and Kebles-prayer, the devout study of Holy Scripture, meditation, and the frequent approach to Christ Himself in the Sacrament of Holy Communion." Many years have elapsed since the holy and revered man who uttered the last words passed away to his rest in Christ. words may fitly stand as a sort of preface to some very imperfect considerations upon things that belong to the peace of all men. It is hardly possible that any one can utter any words of novelty upon topics which have occupied the attention of the most earnest and devout spirits ever since Christendom existed. In a busy and restless time, however, there must always be some who are ready to pay attention to any effort towards deepening spiritual life within the soul of man. When religion has really become the chief interest and truest delight of those who are obliged to pass most of their days in scenes of activity, it is wonderful how little serves to foster and cherish the realities of the faith. Words dropped in casual intercourse often make deeper impression than elaborate

exhortation delivered in its proper place, and by accredited teachers. A remark, nay, even a single epithet, such as the word "prayerless" used in describing the frivolous existence of a young girl in the whirl of society by a master of fiction, has often recalled a wandering spirit to the recollection of that aim in life, which occupation and pleasure had obscured, but which is acknowledged to be the goal of existence in the quiet of the still hour. It is a real happiness granted sometimes to those who are anxious to help others, that their imperfect endeavour is at least appreciated, if it be known to be the result of a true and ardent desire to increase taste for spiritual exercises and devout contemplations. To begin with prayer, the aid to the Divine Life which may to the judgment of some seem to be allsufficing. If prayer is acknowledged as a speaking to God of the wants experienced in the search for the Divine Life, one step is immediately gained. It is most sadly true that many, who are in the habitual and diligent

use of prayer, have never experienced anything of the delight and satisfaction it is capable of imparting to all. To many, even in the highest and purest form of worship, there is something like relief felt when the act of devotion or public service is over. A duty has been performed, and there is even a sense of exhilaration at which one really bent on advance may actually shudder. Why is this? Surely it is because the intense nearness of the relation between the soul and the Saviour-one great purpose of the Incarnation-has never been actually realised. When once the absolute nature of the affinity between the higher nature and the Creator has been imprinted on the mind, it is felt that dependence is no longer bondage, but that the only blessedness attainable here on earth is through obedience. "Thy will be done" in all its force of petition, becomes the watchword of prayer. Very few professing the discipline and service of Christ have passed many years without feeling the intense relief given by unrestrained prayer in a time of deep calamity or bereavement. We have then, as it were, no secrets kept back from God; we desire that He should see us as we are; we spread forth before Him the miseries and shortcomings of a past life, and are ready to promise all we have and all we are, if only we can obtain the inward sense of comfort derived from Him who has been promised as the stay and solace of all hearts in all ages. Comfort does come and strength is imparted, the daily occupations have to be resumed, and the dull round of trivial duties must be again entered upon, and by degrees the keen appetite which we felt for Divine Truth at the time when our grief was sorest entirely disappears, and fades into the common day. It may be that we have trusted too much to our own power of reviving high and ecstatic thought. But in most cases the torpor and chill which too often succeed a time of religious excitement would have yielded, had there been a resolute attempt to throw into family worship or public service the intensity which they really demand, and which

make them, when rightly used, such serviceable aids. Indeed, it is the hardest of all tasks to ennoble the duties which demand constant Prayer must be felt in its dignity exertion. as the means of approach to the Father of all Spirits before it can become a delight. When its real satisfaction is apprehended. when the awful privilege of raising the heart to God in momentary ejaculation in the midst of a crowd, or at the most uninviting task, is known as a reality, then the power of prayer as an aid to the Divine Life may be said to begin. He who has felt that not only at morning and at eventide, in daily service, or in Holy Communion, but at all times and everywhere, the faintest aspiration, taking only the shape of "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" reaches the ear of the Almighty and most merciful Father, who sees all, and knows all, and vet loves the most sinful, is like a man who in the thickest jungle of a mighty forest stumbles upon an axe, which he feels he has only to use to secure his passage from the

intricate maze. It is not too much to say, that he who begins to use prayer as God would have him use it, feels within him something of the reliance which enabled the sorely tried Prince in the greatest of tragedies, to feel that no spirit from the other world could harm his soul—"being a thing immortal as itself." It may be well, however, to suggest some thoughts regarding the real aid to be derived: first, from the diligent use of public, and secondly, from perseverance in private, prayer.

The delight which the soul derives from prayer in acts of worship is a real evidence of the condition of spiritual life. In public prayer we acknowledge our dependence upon God as the only source of the fulfilment of our desires. Worship and united prayer, in the record of God's revelation, are presented to us as the noblest and highest expression of the feelings of the soul. In the dim distance of the beginning of the record of worship, members of one family are seen in united acts of acknowledgment of God. There is the warrant for all

the various forms assumed by worship and prayer in successive ages. When, again, the people of Israel, separated from the nations, enter on the distinctive worship of the Church and nation, we can trace a real witness to the power and life always to be found in united prayer. At last arrives a period when the worship and prayer at Jerusalem vanishes away, and the vision is disclosed of a spiritual society, ever acknowledging the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and affording in the worship of the congregation—the gathering together in special places—opportunities for the real nurture of the Divine Life, and the increase of the true sympathy which comes to numbers. It must. however, be carefully remembered that benefit to the soul is not the primary object of the gathering together of faithful people in prayer and praise. The glory of God, and the acknowledgment of mercies received, must always be carefully kept in mind. When this has been duly remembered, the soul is fitted to reap the full fruit of the prayer which is offered by those

who confess a common frailty, and approach the Father through the Son. It has been vainly said that common prayer is necessarily imperfect, inasmuch as it pre-supposes an absolute identity of sinfulness on the part of those who offer it together. But the words. such as those familiar ones "We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep," are truly comforting in their use, when we remember the many and various forms of sin which they represent to congregations of mixed worshippers. It is the same, too, with any prayer, carefully framed and enriched by the experience of generations, repeated together as the utterance of the great heart of a multitude. Kneeling in contrition there may be one who feels that but for the grace of God he might have stood on the.scaffold as a condemned criminal. Close by his side there may be some tender and delicate one, who has lived to realise the blessings granted to faithful perseverance in the truth, and whose wandering thought is perhaps the only deviation in a life of purity and peace.

Not far off there may be some one immersed in the stir and bustle of life, who longs to be free from the many anxieties that press down the soul. All these, from a hearty resolution to alter what is evil, and to trust more fully in the Divine mercy, draw from prayer, which is the united act of a large or a small number of faithful ones, a peace and strength not to be measured by any words of man. It has been well said that the Divine prayer, on which all our devotions public and private should be modelled, in its comprehensive grasp of petition, seems to extend over all who use it truly, the ineffable sense of dependence which communicates strength to those who worship together. When we read in Scripture the command "thou shalt worship the Lord thy God," we find in it a command which really unfolds the true spiritual powers of the soul, and exhibits man as a being who owes to God homage and devotion. When man comes before his Maker as one of a multitude, he is not bound to forget the essential solitariness of the human spirit in its nearest

relations to heavenly things. There is a sense of inward rejoicing imparted by the consciousness, that although in one sense man is alone and dwells apart for ever, yet is he at the same time heir of a grace and peace, shared alike by all who accept the glorious offers of liberty obtained by Christ for the whole human family. The satisfaction thus imparted to the soul by united acts of prayer does not pass away with the immediate occasion. On the contrary, the renewal of life, granted at such moments, is felt to have an invigorating effect beyond the precincts of the sanctuary. Fresh opportunities of renewing vows and acknowledging mercies are eagerly hailed. In all things the presence of an all-loving Father is seen, and it may be said that one who has experienced the blessedness and life of public prayer, will feel that a consecration has been given to daily acts of insignificant duty, and the dull routine of common things. It is as a member of a body, which may well be called a holy priesthood, that one who has thus been touched by a Divine

impulse longs to offer up the whole life and thought as a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Iesus Christ. The words "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," really contain, when fully comprehended, all that can be said or felt regarding the aid to the Divine Life conveyed in public supplication. A writer who has said many beautiful things on the subject of prayer, has told us that "prayer engendereth a distinct form of manhood, and the highest. As sympathy with self engendereth a distinct form of manhood, in all its fruits. from the meanest to the most heroical, so sympathy with others engendereth the social form of manhood."

Sympathy, indeed, in its highest expression, comes from a constant and habitual use of and delight in united prayer. We cannot help being drawn towards those who use along with us the same supplications in the same place. Intercession, in all its multiform variety, seems the natural result of our joint effort. The forms

and semblances of the world cease to possess reality, when the worshippers acknowledge that there is a Divine fellowship (what has been well called the co-operating presence of God the Holy Ghost) in the solemn litanies and devout aspirations of a congregation believing, expecting, nay, actually experiencing, the rush of Divine Love to the heart, known mercifully in its fulness to all who are in earnest, and who desire to live unspotted from the world. must not be forgotten that in the offering of public prayer there must always be the element of praise and thanksgiving, the true and rightful means of extinguishing self and enabling worshippers to realise their common mercies. When the strength drawn from prayer sometimes seems to be denied to us, the recurrence of a familiar thanksgiving will give the soul wings of aspiration. We often forget that God requires praise from his creatures as well as prayer. The attempt to render praise rightly exercises a soothing influence on our spiritual condition. The contrast between the ceaseless praise of

other worlds and the grudging measure of our own thanksgiving may well humble even the most devout. It is the privilege, however, of those who delight in praise, to know that the offering of earth, imperfect though it be, is seconded and increased by the glad songs of those who worship before the throne. saints on earth, and in Paradise, feel without knowing it the impulse of each other's adoration, and join in with it, like strings that vibrate to the same tune without touching each other." True and deep sympathy in acts of prayer and praise is not gained at once or easily. perseverance in this, as in all other duties, a blessing and promise is granted. Generally speaking, sudden answers, even to the most devout exercises of faith, are not granted. Then must the word spoken of old dwell within the soul as a perpetual remembrancer to wavering faith. "Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." One counsel should be given to those who strive and hope for an answer to united prayer. "Come with earnest desire; come in undoubting faith; come in reverent and yet humble attitude, as one who hath a right, from citizenship in Christ's kingdom, to every blessing and every grace needed for the growth of the river of life within the soul."

### PRIVATE PRAVER.

The advice given by St. Paul to the Thessalonians "To pray without ceasing," includes all the various forms of private prayer. He who, not only at morning and evening but at all times of the day, feels able to address supplication and praise to Heaven, may surely be said to strive after the fulfilment of this duty. Little need be said regarding the importance of daily private prayer at set times. It may be assumed that all who are in earnest acknowledge that habitual daily prayer is required as an evidence and expression of faith, and must be persevered in by those who seek to sustain the hidden principle of life in the soul. The power of prayer, as a spiritual activity, is the token of

the presence of the Holy Spirit. "Prayer is to spiritual life what the beating of the pulse and the drawing of the breath are to the life of the body. It would be as absurd to suppose that life would last when the body was cold and motionless and senseless, as to call a soul alive which does not pray. The state or habit of spiritual life exists itself, consists, in the continual activity of prayer." It may truly be said, that a soul once aroused to a real knowledge of what spiritual life is, finds in prayer the means whereby the veil between things transitory and things heavenly is pierced, and an entrance is gained into a freer and larger atmosphere. One who prays rightly, speaks to God as a child might utter petitions to a parent of whose unchanging love he felt assured. Yet, how few are there who reach even occasionally such a height as this! How many are they who in time of trouble, or at a moment of peril, lift up the heart in eager desire, and yet have never remembered, or in a languid way, the duty of thanksgiving for bounteous mercy. It is possible, however, in prayer as in moral duty, to acquire through habit an increasing intensity and delight. That aspect of prayer, in which it assumes the form of a pouring forth of all our desires to God, must never be left out of sight. God has expressly invited the approach of every child of the kingdom in prayer. The thought of Christ, and of his words, "I am the Way," "No man cometh to the Father but by Me," must be constantly with us when we are preparing for real prayer. It is well sometimes, before we kneel before God, to bring ourselves as it were into his presence, by the recollection of some such Scriptures as tell us of the blessing promised to all who ask that they may receive. In this, as in many other duties, it is better to do little well than to attempt too much. the busiest life, one who is in earnest can find time for a pause. Human language is altogether too weak to express the wonderful idea of God, presented to us under the thought of Him as the answerer of prayer. He knows all, and gives to all the particular strength needed in the most difficult trial of daily life. When once we have grasped the greatness of this thought, however oppressed we may be by the burden of backsliding, prayer will seem to be the real entrance to the gate of Heaven, and the satisfaction derived from it will go with us into every nook and corner of our life. Our private prayers must then be regarded, first, as the direct way whereby we obtain blessings for ourselves, and next, as the sacrifice acceptable to God, made possible only through the offering of our Lord Iesus Christ. Strange as it may appear, the personal strength which we may derive from prayer seems to visit us most completely when we have forgotten our own wants, and delight in acts of homage to the Most High. We must beware of making our own personal supplication too selfish. The more intercession we can utter on the part of others, the greater will be our share in the Divine Life. We are made one with the great High Priest. who is for ever interceding with His people.

Those who have tasted the real delight and

refreshment of prayer do not need rules or counsels. A constant recourse to the record of the Divine Life contained in the Gospels, and a careful meditation on such passages as tell of our Lord's retirement to pray, will be found, especially to the weary and overladen, to supply all that the spirit demands. "Meditation is the soul of prayer," and prayer the body and substance of meditation. The beautiful passage in which Jeremy Taylor describes the real effect of prayer, contains some words which ought constantly to be in the mind of him who desires that his prayer, offered in silence and quiet, shall be a real aid to the Divine Life within him.

"He that is warm to-day and cold to-morrow, zealous in his resolution and weary in his practices, fierce in the beginning and slack and easy in his progress, hath not yet well chosen what side he will be of. For religion cannot change though we do, and if we do, we have left God; and whither he can go that goes from God, his own sorrows will soon instruct him. This fire must never go out; but it must be like

the fire of heaven, it must shine like the stars: though sometimes covered with a cloud, or obscured by a greater light, yet they dwell for ever in their orbs, and walk in their circles, and observe their circumferences, but go not out by day nor night, and set not when kings die, nor are extinguished when nations change their government. So must the zeal of a Christian be a constant incentive to his duty; and though sometimes his hand is drawn back by violence or need, and his prayers shortened by the importunity of business, and some parts omitted by necessities and just compliances, yet still the fire is kept alive, it burns within when the light breaks not forth, and is eternal as the orb of fire or the embers of the altar of incense."

One caution must be added. Many who begin resolutely and strive to deepen Divine Life within their souls, often suffer from bitter discomfiture at the scanty result which they have attained. When such moments of sadness come, help and aid is often found by directin the thoughts towards the mercies and blessing

of former days. Even in the lives of those who are most tried, there are some times and places felt truly to have been real refreshments. If the soul has once begun to taste the power of thanksgiving, a real impulse will be given to fervent and true supplication. These weak words of advice are intended to meet the case of those who have not in these busy days much time to cultivate the contemplative and devout life. No pleasure is sweeter than that gained in the few brief minutes rescued from the pressure of active and engrossing work. No dulness, it may be said, is more terrible than that which befals the worker who has nothing but his work to interest him. After a time he will begin to find, if he be touched with a spirit of prayer, the cleansing and hallowing influence derived from actual conflict with God.

A man, again, whose work lies in the province of thought and exercise of the intellect, discovers speedily, when he has stretched forth his desire towards the Source of all strength, that there are nobler delights than the highest genius can

confer, and a grander converse than that which comes from familiarity with great ideas. Praver is perhaps most potent when it influences and subdues the critical spirit, which in these days seems too often to destroy the creative faculty, and leads men to form gentler and kinder judgments on men, and thoughts, and actions. There is an activity, too, in positive good works, undertaken often for the advance of religion-or the general benefit of mankindwhich sometimes seems to substitute a bustling and restless energy for the inward life of the spirit. The counteraction to such a tendency is best found in the habit of inward or mental prayer, often longing for utterance in half-stifled ejaculations, which have sometimes betrayed to those bystanders who were impressed by the attitude of some prominent man of action, the inward repose of his great soul. It is to be hoped that there are still some who, like the statesman who conducted one of the greates measures of modern times to a successful enprepare for a great debate by special prayer

or like another, still living, who is said to have asked a friend at a distance to remember him in prayer, at the time when he was about to introduce a bill, the result of which would affect millions of his fellow-countrymen. Pascal is said to have sighed deeply in the presence of a friend, and upon being asked the reason, said that he was thinking of the misery of those who knew not the delight of prayer.

If, in the still hour when we are alone with God, we hold in memory the words, "Worship the Lord with holy worship," "Give the Lord the honour due to His name," we shall taste of the blessedness that comes from the employment of our highest faculties, and the fulfilment of our greatest functions. We shall go back to the daily round of duty, unmoved by the variations of human opinion, and with the conscious ness of a faith, sanctified by trust in Him who is ever interceding, ever yearning, ever loving those who seek to gain through Him the place He has secured for all, in the city and kingdom of His Father.

### CHAPTER II.

### THE DEVOUT STUDY OF THE BIBLE.

WE must not forget, in an attempt to enumerate the principal aids to the Divine Life, how completely Holy Scripture assigns to it an internal character. "The kingdom of God," says St. Paul, "is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." In a word, the Divine Life within the soul of man is supernatural, and it cannot therefore be recommended or enforced in the same way in which simple moral duties can be delineated and analysed. Just as in personal intercourse we are conscious of the charm which exhales from the life and conversation of one who lives above the world, so are we. if once really engaged in the pursuit of spiritual life, aware of a presence, perceived by ourselves. alone. We find by degrees that our taste for truth dwarfs all former interests. It is not that the objects themselves cease to exist for us, they

only assume their proper and true proportions. This is remarkably the case when part of our exertion is devoted to a real study of Holy Scripture, undertaken not for the mere sake of intelligent satisfaction, but with a true desire to deepen spiritual life. It has sometimes been said that the study of the great Italian poet of the Middle Ages indisposes the mind of a student towards other poetry. Compared with Dante, other poets are found to be wanting in that power of imparting energy which many, busied on great affairs, have felt to be as active on the forces of their minds as a restorative tonic to the human frame. It may be said, too. that this effect, increased and intensified, has been experienced again and again by those who have once begun to find in the devout study of Scripture their supreme delight. All other books seem to have lost their zest and flavour. That power which has many times been likened to the eye of a portrait, fixed on those who are moving in a room, and which undoubtedly resides in Holy Scripture, arrests and possesses. them. In a forgotten religious tale, a your man who has learned to love religion and trut finds himself under the roof of a master who a careless and indifferent man. He search his Bible, and gathers comfort from the recolle tion of Daniel, faithful through a long life in heathen court. This is an instance of the wa in which a soul in earnest may use and valt one of the many methods which Scriptu employs—its perfectly faithful portraiture human character.

No doubt it must be freely admitted the great books, especially such as treat of hig and ennobling topics, are capable of commun cating peculiar influences, even when they contain the record of a revelation from heaven. The disciples of the great philosophers of antiquity drew from the recordes ayings of their master a strange and unearth nourishment, which enabled men frequently contemn the things of this world. Teaching lessons may be drawn from the records of the oriental nations, and the fanatic fakir has some

thing to teach the servants of a truer faith. The power of a book over one who has drawn from its pages a supply of strength for thought and action, is one of the most marvellous evidences of the effect man has upon man. Personal intercourse with great and wise teachers effects changes in character, sometimes quite incredible.

The influence of books for good, for evil, can never perhaps be properly estimated. What may be affirmed with certainty is, that all the effects traceable to the influence of books—of insight, of true power—seem capable of being gathered up, as it were, by those who make the Bible their own personal, individual study.

It has often been said that the value men attach to free access to Holy Scripture is a sure test and sign of their spiritual condition. Doubtless, in days of difficulty, when the open Bible was not within reach of all, the power of Holy Scripture was felt by those who were able to come within its influence, like a ray of light suddenly admitted into a darkened room. We

cannot revive, even if we would, the same energy which led men to gather round one who read in public from the newly-translated Bible. as may be seen in a picture once familiar to many. But the extraordinary vigour and life resident in Holy Scripture may often be witnessed in the shape of a practical evidence to truth, when one who has long been a stranger to the duty of searching the Scriptures sets himself in real earnest to his delightful task. He may have heard some passage in the Old or New Testament, brought home by fervent exhortation to his own peculiar need. He may have formed the inward resolution to begin at once to follow the advice-at times the best that can be given to all—in the words of a deep thinker, to read the Bible humbly, with prayer. Not, however, until he has made particular portions his own personal possession, not until he has found that there is a direct message to his own soul, does he begin to entertain anything like an adequate conception of the influence c Holy Scripture in unfolding the spiritual life

man. Like a strong swimmer, in buoyant and invigorating water, he seems to gather strength and pleasure in the exercise of his newly-found power.

To most men, the consciousness of growth in grace is immediate. When all the powers of the mind are directed towards the end of acquiring new light from Holy Scripture, it may seem strange sometimes that a portion of it, in familiar and habitual use from childhood, should begin at once to possess for us a power of speaking to us, not only as members of God's family, but conveying a fitting remedy for the particular disease under which we may be at the moment labouring. But it is thus that Scripture exerts its own proper authority over us, and declares its magical property of subduing to itself opposite and contrary forces.

Devout study, however, aided by the reverent use of the imaginative faculty, will bring even the patriarch Abraham, in his wandering and trial, really near to ourselves in the changes and chances of our own lives.

We cannot know Abraham as we know St. Paul, St. Peter, or St. John. We can see, nevertheless, what an intense power and purity there must have been in the life and worship of the man in whose tent and family the hope of the world resided. There passes into the soul, from such a contemplation of character, an almost conscious life. We are in contact with faith in its highest condition and aspiration. The record may be scanty, but there is before us one tempted as most men are, and even after moments of communion with the angel of Jehovah, yielding to the lower temptation of earthly things. We gather confidence in our belief in one communion of faithful people, as we see how the unity of God, in an age of polytheism, shone like a star on the path of Abraham, and made him the Father of the faithful, while time lasts.

Those who have the opportunity will find that in the early part of their day they can give most readily a portion of their time to devout study of Scripture. A real desire to acquire new life will be ready to take advantage of the few minutes that busy lives can afford to spend in such employment. When morning prayer is over, it is well to reflect first on the gifts of body and mind requisite for the due discharge of spiritual duty. The need of thankfulness to man is shown in the fact that thankfulness begets thankfulness. It is not a mere form of words, or of pious expression, which is contained in the well-known lines—

"New mercies each returning day Hover around us while we pray."

The very opening of the volume, day by day, will remind us how little we have gained, how much there is still to learn. There, as in other studies, "there is small chance of truth at the goal where there is not a childlike simplicity at the starting-place." If it be true that as we advance in life we grow naturally more indulgent to the faults of others, it may also be said that in the study of Holy Scripture, and especially in the study of its characters, we become naturally

more merciful towards the blemishes of our brethren, and yet more exacting as regards our own conduct and life. What are we who know so much, and have so many teachers, after all in the sight of God, is the thought which may well make us tremble and adore, when having closed the book, we ask for the faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, or the patience of Job. The Bible is not, however, only a book of character.

Another most profitable and true aid to the Divine Life is a careful and attentive consideration of the wondrous scope and purpose of the whole volume of prophecy. In this province, it is to be feared, much that is delightful and interesting is too often put on one side, even by those who are on the whole earnest and true-hearted in their desire after a new life. It is too often taken for granted, that because much that is contained in prophecy has been fulfilled in the New Testament, no real instruction can be gained from the contemplation of the gradual disclosure of truth made by prophets in suc-

cessive ages. When once the awful wonder occasioned by the delivery of a prophetic message has been truly apprehended, a student of this portion of the Bible finds an interest most engrossing in the whole subject. To him the prophet is no longer a mere seer, but a minister of righteousness, who witnesses for God, and calls men to the duty which maintains social life and order. He has a message clear and distinct to men of other lands and other tongues. He is always before his own age, the herald of a day when righteousness and truth shall exert the true dominion over men. The expectation of the Christ is found to be the sustaining prop of national and individual life. and the suffering exclamation of the passionate Jeremiah shadows forth the everlasting and yearning love of One who gathers up in His travail for the souls of His beloved disciples all the longings and entreaties of the great procession of prophets, from the days of the seventh from Adam until the time of Malachi.

In the study of prophecy the real aspirant

after truth requires constantly to remind himself of that which has been well expressed by a deeply spiritual writer, "that Scripture is not the substitute for God's drawing nigh to us, it is only the channel; the written Word of the past must become the living Word of the present."

It is possible for men to be ardent students of prophecy, and yet to miss the intensity of meaning which it has for the man within the Nothing but a resolute endeavour to make the secret treasure of Holy Scripture our own, preserves within us the sense of refreshment which the direct exhortation of the Bible is intended to convey. Constant diligence and quiet perseverance are here, as elsewhere, their own reward. The example of Him who had the word of God abiding in Him, may well instruct us as to the study of the prophetic parts of the Bible. May we not say that the very familiarity with which our Lord handles the writings of the prophets, teaches even more than direct instruction as to the method of renewing the Divine Life within the soul? In the humble home of Nazareth, in this as in all things relating to the growth of the perfect Manhood, as well as in the worship of the synagogue, we feel that there must have been a constant remembrance of much that the prophets had written. True knowledge, according to Christ's own saying, is eternal life.

The knowledge granted to those who search diligently the declarations and fulfilments of prophecy, admits all thoughtful and prayerful students to what may even be called open vision. In the Book of Psalms, a portion of Scripture, so suggestive as to baffle all power of expressing adequately the feelings created within the soul capable of entering into the various disclosures of the nature of God represented in it, we are in a region where prophecy and active yearning after holiness melt into one. Those who once have begun to make the Psalms their manual of devotion have found that deepening experiences unfold more and more of the spiritual communion and strength

To seek daily renewal, a sense of sin and the assurance of pardon, is a constant task for a soul in earnest. To realise the condition of sinfulness, and the imperfection attendant on all real effort, does not debar him who feels it from the gladness and joy which are promised to believers. All this, and how much more, opens out to anxious enquiry from the devout study of a few lines in a single chapter, and thus can one who is really intent on gaining more and more of true knowledge, discover in the Gospel history a never-failing treasure of the one thing that is needful.

To enter daily into the unseen world is really part of the daily bread granted to all who ask for a constant supply. Every attempt to gain more acquaintance with the Christ of history, the Christ of the Gospels, acts upon the soul, as a gymnastic exercise, carefully persevered in, influences the human frame. If the thought that we are always receivers, and never in any sense givers, be always present to the mind, there is small danger of our devout study of

Scripture degenerating into a mechanical exercise. The poet in his thoughtful and teaching sonnet tells of a servant of Christ who has been cheered in his hard trial by thoughts of Christ the Living Bread; and there are souls whose daily, weary task becomes a privilege and a delight, when once they have gained the happy height of contemplation conferred on all who have made the Gospel history a portion of their being. We need not ever be oppressed with the sense of loneliness if this devout study has brought us to Jesus. The history of the rise and progress of the Church as a society, founded by the Apostles, and cheered by the living presence of the Lord himself, discovered to us in the Book of the Acts, will also afford matter most varied and most interesting.

Life is indeed too short even to approach the full extent of thought and feeling presented to us in the life and writings of the great Apostle of the nations. The Acts of the Apostles, and the other remains of Apostolic teaching contained in the later books of the New Testament, are not only witnesses of the true development of doctrine, but the real and active instruments of promoting and sustaining communion with Christ. We are sometimes apt to think that preference for one portion of Scripture over another is in some way an undervaluing of the unique character of the record. But it is indeed a merciful provision for the weakness of human nature, that particular Epistles and special passages, instinct with life and feeling, acquire for us a tenderness and truthfulness altogether unspeakable, when we see in the words of an Apostle a human and divine touch, which, to use well-known words, "finds us," and singles us out from our fellowmen.

It is thus that the message contained in the Book proves its Divine origin. It is thus that the unseen communion of saints becomes a reality to the soul. There ought to be, especially at the present time, no attempted disparagement of the strength of external evidence. But when we enter into really devout study of the

# MY AIDS TO THE DIVINE LIFE.

Bible, we feel that we have passed into a region where these considerations have no place, and are like those who have disbanded the axioms which must be assumed in the acquisition of exact science. Reality and sincerity are the two wings always ready to support those who aspire after the life gained from devout study of the Bible. The first aspiration should indeed be hailed. "When, therefore," says William Law, "the first spark of a desire after God arises in thy soul, cherish it with all thy care, give all thy heart unto it; it is nothing less than a touch of the Divine loadstone that is to draw thee out of the vanity of time into the riches of eternity. Get up, therefore, and follow it as gladly as the wise men of the East followed the star from heaven that appeared to them. It will do for thee as the star did for them-it will lead thee to the birth of Jesus, not in a stable at Bethlehem in Judæa, but to the birth of Jesus in the dark centre of thine own fallen soul."

If the question be asked, especially by those

who are new to this delightful employment, what rule or system can I adopt really helpful to students, the answer will be best found in a resolution to begin at once daily study, even for a very brief time. Those who are privileged to lead a life of quiet duty will be happy indeed if they can set apart some particular portion of their day, some particular place made sacred by this engrossing and delightful labour. many years ago, one whose liberality in all good works was conspicuous, was found alone, snatching as it were a few moments from a busy day. In answer to the question how he could contrive to go at once from the thoughts of the money market into the different life presented in the Epistles of St. Paul, he replied. "I have never forgotten the look of delight with which William Wilberforce, in my father's house, turned away from a political discussion, to resume his study of the New Testament; and I resolved, however busy my life might be, to try to snatch a few moments for Bible reading every day. I have succeeded, and have found that

# MY AIDS TO THE DIVINE LIFE.

the habit brings a daily delight." In these days there are many incitements to the intelligent study of Holy Scripture. He who has began to study the Bible devotionally has provided for himself a treasure, out of which he will bring sweetness and light for every day's shadow or sunshine. He will find that the Book which offers to the intellect its highest gratification, brings to the soul that unspeakable sense of true satisfaction, more enduring even than the contentment which waits on the solution of the deepest mental problems.

## CHAPTER III.

#### MEDITATION.

THE practice of meditation, one from which the holiest and wisest have derived great comfort, is a true aid to the Divine Life. It admits of a more practical treatment than prayer, or the devout study of the Bible. Some have objected to it, as having a tendency to invade the region of practical religion, and create within the soul a taste for a somewhat dreamy contemplation. All danger of this kind, however, may be averted if the advice of one who entered truly into the spirit of devotion were followed. "In order to meditate, if you have time collect yourself as in the presence of God. Lift up your heart to Him for light. Then think of the matter you have chosen, as before Him, looking to see what He shows you in it. End with an act of the will, chosing the good you have seen, or rejecting the evil, pray your Heavenly Father to

keep you in that mind." These simple rules really comprise all that can be offered in the way of practical advice. What is really required is, that one who desires to meditate should really have a power of concentrating thought upon one subject. This may seem easy to those who have never attempted the task. In reality, however, it is hard. Much of the distaste for devotional exercises at first encountered by those who are earnest in self-improvement, arises from inability to concentrate attention. One who has been successful in retaining or acquiring the power, will soon experience a remarkable satisfaction in the practice of meditation. The Articles of the Apostles' Creed, the Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sermon on the Mount, will at once occur to the mind as affording endless subject for meditation. Every character and event in the Old and New Testament may in turn be selected. But it is well to fasten on particular events in the lives—such, for instance, as the Warning of Joshua, the Call of Samuel, the Faltering of Elijah, the Choice of Solomon

-rather than attempt a meditative review of a whole career. The words which are made use of in the first delivery of the Gospel, such as Life, Light, Grace, Truth, Peace, Faith, Hope, Repentance, Remission, Knowledge, all suggesting practical and present duty, should then follow in order, and employ every energy and power of those who are in earnest in making meditation an aid to the Divine Life. So far from withdrawing interest from the active concerns of every-day life, the practice acts with bracing and invigorating energy on the whole spiritual system. For a time at least, we move in a region peopled by mighty spirits, and free from present contention. We see life wholly. and not in disordered fragments. We acquire a real desire for that healthful action, which it has been said ought to follow every act of real prayer, and communion with God. The contrast between our life and what we profess becomes evident, and we see ourselves as we are, for there can be no real meditation without self-examination also. They are, indeed, sister

habits, never to be sundered without detriment and loss to that acute personal perception of sin—the sensibility to sin—absolutely essential to real progress in the Divine Life.

It has sometimes been objected to real and systematic meditation, that it is apt to assume an almost regimental precision and exactness, hurtful to spiritual growth. Our thoughts, say such objectors, may go astray from the general enlightenment afforded to the human race by the entrance of the Gospel message into the world, and regard its promise of peace simply a solace to the solitary soul. It is true that meditation ought at times to dwell on the kingdom of Christ, the subdual of thought and mind to their true Master, and the need of salvation to all men.

One who meditates wisely will think on these things. Yet it remains true, that the various revelations of God make their appeals to men as separate souls. The power of the revelation is only truly felt by those who use it according to God's prescribed order. Personal experience

must make trial of the remedy proposed as a cure for human ill. Meditation, if it brings truly to the heart the Divine method by which wandering affection and error are removed, becomes a most powerful means for realising not only the misery of the soul apart from God, but the preciousness of a place in the faithful body of those who are really abiding in Christ. It may of course be possible to mistake an ecstatic feeling of security for that real life, "hid with Christ in God" which is a sober certainty to many a soul.

Meditation has a strange power of enabling those who use it to discriminate between the fleeting phantom of passing enthusiasm and a desire "to go and do likewise," when the heart has been roused by a sudden insight into the power and wisdom of Christ. We must beware of a tendency to criticise and analyse methods of instruction in spiritual growth. They are to be used in humility. In this, as in all other approaches to Christ, we should desire to possess the spirit of true discipleship and

earnest longing. If this be ours, if we are really desiring to know wisdom secretly in our hour of meditation, when we are longing for light, like Nathanael under the fig-tree, in the early days of Christ's earthly ministry, a revelation of even greater things than we have yet seen will be granted at a time when we hardly look for it.

In all days of earnest personal religion there has been a tendency to ask "Wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain?" and the Bible in many of its pages gives expression to this despondency and natural despair. It is meditation, if rightly used, that can alone supply a sufficient answer to all querulous misbelief. We see in the unfolding of a progressive revelation, in the darkest hour of man's trial, the Manifestation of Christ, longed for by prophets or looked back upon by apostles, yielding a true rendering of the meaning of past history, and promising to shed a light on all that is to come, in the return of the Son of God as a king to His kingdom, as a Saviour to each

single soul. Nothing, perhaps, gives us so deep an insight into our own capacities as immortal beings as the discovery that we are capable, by the use of meditation, of acquiring a larger and truer knowledge of the realities of the faith. We know that we are to see Christ as He is. "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." If we are able to rise in a determined performance of acts of meditation, from the engrossing perplexity and care that await all men, we shall find ourselves in the presence of God.

In this exercise the words of the author of "The Imitation of Christ" may well console him who thinks it beyond his power, and a privilege fitted only for some select and favoured few, "when the grace of God cometh into a man, then he is made able for all things."

## CHAPTER IV.

## SELF-EXAMINATION.

No real progress in the spiritual life can be made without self-examination. It is at once a duty and a privilege. The solemn review of life which, it has been said, those who have recovered from partial drowning experience, would naturally leave a deep mark on the soul. Men who have been subjected to such a process as this would ever after take a more solemn view of the responsibilities of life. The same impression produced by this experience is within the power of all who begin seriously to examine and prove their own selves. There is a benefit doubtless in confession, or the practice would never have gained the widespread influence it has reached. Whatever benefit, however, it may possess, can undoubtedly be obtained by any humble-minded student of the Bible who sets about the task of self-examination. Indeed, if the practice were more common, there would be fewer instances of despondency and wretchedness, ending too often in a misplaced confidence in a director or confessor.

In self-examination, it is well not to attempt too much at first. The work should begin with inquiry as to the profitable use made of spiritual privileges. At the close of the day sacred to rest and worship, an examination into the languor and wandering, so often felt in public worship, will have the effect at least of arresting us. Is it well, we may be inclined to ask, to persevere in habitual duty when we derive no pleasure from its performance? Can we mean anything by a service which seems dull, and formal, and mechanical? Can we ever hope to satisfy a hungry desire after holiness, while we have never yet known the freedom and liberty of truth? Those who begin such an inquiry as this will soon find that there is some grievous moral fault, poisoning the springs of action, and depriving religious service of its true life.

Self-examination will then commence with a positive breach of the moral law. Every day will have its account to render. "What sin have I committed? what have I done? what have I said? what have I seen this day? what have I heard this day, that might be matter of humiliation and grief to me?"

To use the language of an old writer: "Ground, if it lie long unploughed, will require much pains to rear it and fetch it up; but if it be oft done, it will be the easier. So it is with the heart of man. He must not let his heart lie fallow too long, but take it to task ever and anon, and labour to keep the flesh tender, and raw, and fresh, as we may say; and then upon every occasion it will be ready to bleed and pour itself forth."

For want of perseverance in self-examination, men fail to find the real help it affords. It is often strange to find that those who are really possessed of deep spiritual instinct are entirely strangers to their own inner lives. Delusion has sprung up, and choked the growth of healthful plants in the garden of the soul Nothing can dispel the evil effects of delusion so completely as a thorough scrutiny into the motives of particular actions. As men grow into a greater knowledge of their own hearts. they increase in forbearance and charity. a severity in dealing with themselves, though it is sometimes supposed to lead to spiritual pride. is often the prelude to a true and living harmony of the affections and desires of the soul. There is nothing again which surprises us so much as the power which we gain in recalling sins of omission or commission, after the work of self-scrutiny has been persistently pursued, even for a short time. The most effective method is simply to begin by trying to recall in due order the events of a single day. The great bane to progress is indifference. Self-examination creates a horror of indifference, sets before us the intense beauty of single-mindedness, and creates a desire to think simply, to speak simply, and to act simply. Sincerity imperceptibly becomes the law of life, and we desire

to gain victory after victory over besetting sins, such as temper, pride, vanity and arrogance, and we are astonished in our systematic reviewal of the progress we have made.

It must be remembered also that in this work we must endeavour to ascertain the relation we occupy to the great doctrines and facts of the Christian Faith. Many fall into an unsatisfactory condition from want of realising the power that is derived from a right reception of the truth conveyed in the belief in certain great doctrines. The Gospel of the Resurrection, for instance, in all its profound bearing upon the life of a society and the life of an individual member, may not have been received as a seminal truth until we have actually realised our own attitude as regards the great fact in our Lord's ministry. We must search and see if it has really enabled us to rise above this present life. and "think nobly of the soul." We must strive to put ourselves in the position of those who found, in the first teaching of the Apostles upon this subject, the true impulse towards a higher and better life, and the true solution of the difficulties in their career.

It might be easy to multiply instances of the valuable aid self-examination affords us when it is directed towards the verities which underlie the whole body of Christian truths. In this matter, however, an individual believer will soon frame a system for himself. He will not require technical and mechanical counsels. With his Bible in his hand, and some carefullychosen manual of devotion, he has all that he needs. He finds far more that is contrary to true faith in his heart than he expected. various seasons of life have passed away from him, and the things of time alone have left their impress on his soul. He shudders, it may be, at the sight of his own condition; but a remembrance of the nature of his unchangeable Guide brings him back to something like the disposition and temper of a better day. In words such as these he finds a rest: "There is no true life but the life of Faith. O Lord, let me live out of the world with Thee, if Thou wilt;

# MY AIDS TO THE DIVINE LIFE.

but let me not live in the world without Thee."

A beginner must only at first attempt general examination of conscience. Many have been disheartened at the slow progress made, and there is perhaps hardly any method for improvement in spiritual life in which perseverance is more demanded than this. In a very short time, however, one who has made a general survey of temptations and failings, will experience such real earnestness in prayer that he will desire to gain a greater command over the soul. Self-knowledge is increased, but selfknowledge, it must be remembered, is not the real end of self-examination. Some persons have felt a curious interest in a morbid anatomy of self, and yet have not advanced in real contrition and sorrow for sin. It is well to struggle in self-examination after a real knowledge of besetting sins. These a determined resolution may soon overcome, at least in their more prominent positions. Effort will then be needed to prevent the recurrence of occasions of falling. An awful interest is thus imparted to the spiritual struggles of a soul in earnest.

Men feel themselves burdened by certain weights which they know will fall from them as they advance along a path determined for their journey. When one of these is gone, there is a sense of immediate relief. The knowledge tha a perfect freedom may at last be attained quickens energy and imparts new strength. all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me," are words which will ofter occur to those who have mastered the difficulties of a general self-examination, and are able to proceed to that particular dealing with infir mities and imperfections, so profitable and ye often so wearisome. It is often hard to fine that although we have overcome general ten dencies to great sins, we are vexed by as inability to act from right motives, or to abstain from wandering thought in the highest and mos solemn services. The recollection of St. Paul's wonderful teaching is indeed needed, if we are ever tempted to believe that we can rest or what we have attained on this side of the grave. The habit, however, of particular examination, if duly practised, confers upon those who use it a strong delight of its own. It may, indeed, and sometimes does, degenerate into formalism, and if watchfulness is relaxed, a critical condition of spiritual disease may arise. He, however, who knows that there are such dangers in front of him, is already prepared. What in most cases is really needed is a determination never to forget that the Spiritual Life is really supernatural, and that there is a power emanating from the risen Humanity of Christ which can give life and spirit to every true-hearted attempt to live according to the apostolic rule of life wherein true self-examination has its real office and work in the kingdom of the soul.

# CHAPTER V.

### LIVING BY RULE.

IT has often been remarked that in the New Testament we have principles to guide us, but that direct rules of conduct, except in a few instances, are entirely wanting. This has, o course, often led those who have been called upon to direct others in matters concerning the spiritual life to insist upon the necessity of plain and direct rules for guidance. The experience of individuals is often most valuable A false shame too often prevents us from availing ourselves of the experience of those well fitted to direct others. The dangers of relying too much upon others, and submitting to the imposition of authority, often deprive many of invaluable aid. Rules, however, have a distinct place and feature in the attainment of spiritual life. No very direct and real progress can be made unless there be an attempt to adhere to

what has been thought to be really helpful in the way of direction. It is natural sometimes to feel surprised that in the Apostolic Epistles little mention is made of the need for private prayer or public worship. But here it is needful to remember the occasional nature of these writings, intended to supply the particular wants of particular communities, with the teaching or advice needed at certain times. He who would mould his life according to rule, must saturate his mind with the prevailing principles of the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, and then endeavour to remember constantly that he may still observe all that is important and needful, even when circumstances forbid the strict observance of the rules of his life. No doubt the happiest life is that of the man who is able to combine contemplation and action so wisely that his days are bound together by natural piety. There are few, however, who are able to control the order of their life so completely as to effect such a harmony between thought and action.

What, then, it may be asked, ought to be the method pursued by one who is anxious to live by rule? First, it must be said, that every particular rule adopted should be founded strictly on some principle plainly contained in the Bible. Those who have begun the cultivation of spiritual life, often have fallen into the error of attempting to carry out rules which the ordinary course of human affairs renders impossible. A man, for instance, may determine, and wisely determine, to avoid certain social temptations, and then may find himself suddenly called to assume a position where he must of necessity modify his rule. It is needless to say that real reflection will generally enable those in carnest to avoid such pitfalls. Rules are after all subordinate to principles, and yet for true attainment of growth in grace they are indispensable.

The study of the life of any great writer is enough to show how perfect a discipline mar may make for himself when he has some great end in view. If an attempt is really made to s a portion of each day apart for the discharge of a particular duty, the very exercise itself will be found to confer indirect benefit on the spiritual life. The real disadvantage of over-adherence to rules consists in the unconscious feeling of superiority to others, sometimes produced by a formal observance of things found beneficial in our own case. We should never forget that the rules of self-denial or frequency in devotion we delight in, may not be needful to others. We should beware, also, of attempting to impose them on those younger than ourselves, for there is nothing which creates rebellion so actively as the resistance produced in the minds of the young by an enforced rule of spiritual life, alien to the whole taste or temper.

Strength of will comes with the observance of definite rule. The blessing of submission and obedience is felt most surely when we have ourselves, after grave and mature deliberation, ordered our lives and laid down rules culled from a diligent consideration of the principles of our faith. Many are often tempted to sigh

after lives of such quietness and composure as might secure for them a constant observance of well-considered rules of life. Here, as elsewhere, it is well to keep in mind that the true power of the Divine Life is perhaps best appreciated by those who have least leisure in their ordinary existence. A few rules adopted after mature thought should be thoroughly tried before any alteration is devised. Human beings are wonderfully unlike each other, and it has always been found that the rules prescribed in communities require constant supervision and liberal interpretation. It is a false step to determine the amount of time to be given to private devotion, although a certain hour may often be rightly set aside for such purpose.

Few persons will be found to believe that their days have been well spent. Yet he who has striven to redeem the time and live by rule must necessarily have less to regret than those whose lives have been entirely devoid of system and method. The efforts of one who walks according to rule are not discordant but effective.

## MY AIDS TO THE DIVINE LIFE. 65

As S. T. Coleridge says: "He organises the hours, and gives them a soul; and to that, the very essence of which is to fleet and to have been, he communicates an imperishable and a spiritual nature. Of the good and faithful servant, whose energies, thus directed, are thus methodised, it is less truly affirmed that he lives in time, than that time lives in him. His days, months, and years, as the stops or punctual marks in the record of duties performed, will survive the wreck of worlds, and remain extant when Time itself shall be no more."

A few general words of advice may be given. One great object in striving after the Divine Life is the attainment of liberty. In moments of enthusiasm we are apt to imagine that exemption from rule secures liberty. But, on the contrary, if the rule we adopt be based on a sound principle, it is found that in the end liberty is secure.

Let the rule then have due regard to individual power, and the opportunity for its fulfilment. When this is done it ought not to be abandoned except for some very sufficient reason. If a society or association, having rules of its own, should be joined, care should be taken lest any of its provisions interfere with the more general rules of holy living chosen after due reflection. If the opportunity for observing certain rules be lost, as, for instance, from the incidents of a busy day, or some wholly unexpected pressure, care should be taken to resume a regular practice as if no break had occurred. Many have found comfort and relief from storing the mind with such simple but deep truths as the Apostolic injunctions contain. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Passages like this, carefully selected. will often come as refreshments of abiding power to him who is vexed with the thought that there is little progress in his spiritual life, and that he cannot attain to that perfect regularity which he feels essential to onward movement. Lastly, it must ever be remembered that although it is impossible to foresee the events or incidents of a single day, he who lives

### MY AIDS TO THE DIVINE LIFE. 67

as the bondman of sober rule may by calm resolve meet occasions of evil as they arise with a spirit of intense reliance on the strength of the unchangeable Saviour.

To hit the right medium between an observance which may degenerate into bondage, and the lawless liberty of untempered zeal, is never easy. Those whose lives and writings have afforded help to seekers after the Divine Life have been enabled to preserve, by living according to rules learnt in the school of Christ, the path of the just that leads to rest. Here indeed we learn, through submission to wise rule, that we are as children led by the hand of an unseen Friend, away from the smiling plains to the little "Zoar" of true refuge.

#### CHAPTER VI.

# THE STUDY OF THE LIVES OF EMINENT SAINTS.

IT has been beautifully said that in the lives and thoughts of good men "we can trace" the history, if not of the "Catholic Church," at least of "the Communion of Saints." It is indeed a mark of advancement in the spiritual life when we feel ourselves able to rise with benefit from the perusal of the lives of those who have been the true salt of the world. The link which such a delight supplies between rich and poor. between learned and unlearned, is indeed a strange one. To human beings, a real disclosure of what men or women have undergone in the battle of life will always have a paramount interest. The important place occupied by lives in Holy Scripture is in itself an evidence of the Divine consideration for human infirmity. Many to whom pages of Holy Writ

appeal in vain, have been stirred by the simple recital of a life not unlike their own; and as the world grows older, it will be found more and more that the important lessons which are learnt from great histories may be gleaned in some measure from the lives of those who have played no great part in worldly affairs.

Few lives have ever been written in such a way as to supply the exact need of a soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness. We are often, however, surprised to find, in the case of one who has achieved for himself a position of great interest to mankind, that the story of his life sheds an indirect light upon the path of spiritual life. The aid to be derived from the lives of men in earnest, although their occupation has not led them to any particular branch of religious service, is often most valuable. Any one who gives advice as to the selection of lives likely to prove of aid in the spiritual life must beware of narrowness. must remember that the story of a life which may have brought comfort to his own soul may fall dead and flat on the minds of others. He must also be careful to distinguish between the exaggerations of biographers and friends and the sober realities of character. But he should always bear in mind that those who are bent on real progress may safely be trusted to disentangle the true from the false, in a labour which will be its own best reward.

In the delightful Memoir of Henry Martyn, a character endeared to all lovers of the saintly life, he dwells with rapture on the passages in Milner's "Church History" which contain notices of the lives of the early Saints and Fathers. "The holy love and devout meditations of Augustine and Ambrose I delight to think of; no uninspired sentence ever affected me so much as that of the historian: that to believe, to suffer, and to love, was the primitive taste." Many years have gone by since the writer of these words passed to his rest.

Since that time many have been busy in endeavouring to place before others the lives of great saints who show the real power of truth in thought and action. Biographies of good men and women, like hymns, are the common property of Christendom. The seed sown by their works is carried far away into other lands. It is through their influence that we learn not to despair of the future, but to trust that the empire of Christ is only beginning to prevail. The thoughts, only perhaps intended for the eve of some faithful friend, and inscribed in a letter or diary, open out to us the wonderful reach of the human spirit longing after God. If we take, for instance, such a revelation of character as that given to us in the "Confessions of Saint Augustine," the thoughts of Pascal, the breathings of David Brainerd, the letters and journals of Dr. Arnold, we long to know more of the lives and struggles of those who felt so deeply and truly, and are drawn irresistibly by the compulsion of what almost seems a new affection towards Him who was the centre of their thought and love.

It is a real direct aid to spiritual life to became almost personally acquainted with some devout soldier, or true-hearted statesman, who has found a real rest in Christ to be the only solace capable of imparting lasting strength. We are carried away from the small sphere of our daily existence into a region where the spirit seems to expand and grow. It is possible. doubtless, to carry a love for the study of the lives of saints too far. There is sometimes a danger in attempting to transfer highly-wrought feelings into our own province of exertion. Yet, on the whole, men are the better for sometimes asking themselves the question "How would he, whose life seems to me so noble, act were he alive and in my place? How would he overcome the resistance I feel so hard, when I would fain flee away from the depressing languor that seems to deaden my spiritual life?"

It has been often said that the lives of a few unsuccessful persons, if they could be truly written, would perhaps convey more direct instruction than the story of conquest and triumph. Some years ago, a most profitable lesson was taught to the Christian ministry by the record of a life spent in the truest exertion, yet on the whole seemingly barren in result. From the untiring faith and true humility of that good man, many years after he had passed from earth, many took courage in the midst of ungrateful labours, and felt that it is given to man to work, to a greater to reap.

"There is no failure for the good and wise:
What though thy seed should fall by the wayside
And the birds snatch it; yet the birds are fed;
Or they may bear it far across the tide
To give rich harvest after thou art dead."

A small tract, the real record of the life of a Working Man, was singled out by a divine of great power as having remarkable features of its own. It has been the means of producing complete change in the lives of some in very different ranks of life. Singular effects have often followed from one passage in a great man's life. What is told of Bishop Butler on his death-bed cannot unfortunately be traced.

to any certain source. Like the famous utter ance of Sir Philip Sidney, it cannot be found it any contemporary record. It is, however, so remarkable that it may be well to give it as i stands in Bishop Fitzgerald's "Life of Butler."

"When Bishop Butler lay on his death-bed he called for his chaplain and said, 'Though I have endeavoured to avoid sin, and to please God to the utmost of my power, yet, from the conscious ness of perpetual infirmities, I am still afraic to die.' 'My lord,' said the chaplain, 'you have forgotten that Jesus Christ is a Saviour. 'True,' was the answer, 'but how shall I know that he is a Saviour for me?' 'My lord, it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."' 'True,' said the Bishop, 'and I am surprised, that though I have read the Scripture a thousand times over, I never felt its virtue till this moment; and now I die happy."

Many, doubtless, in reading this anecdote have felt deeply the lesson read by the confession of a great intellect. Many, too, who have pondered over the perfectly authentic

account of the last moments of Arnold, and his murmur of the words of the confession of Saint Thomas, have grown almost in a moment into a deep and complete conviction that the truth which could thus subdue and comfort in the last hour, must indeed be a revelation of One who is the same for ever. It is well, perhaps, to select as favourite reading the life of one whose experience is entirely different from our own. Truth is approached by many avenues, and has many aspects. He whose life is spent in busy scenes is often permitted to attain a very complete vision of some neglected aspect of truth. The correspondence of two friends, which has been given to the world, one of them an eminent divine, the other a great lawyer, abounds in instances of the different sort of value different minds may attach to positive truths.

One feature is indeed remarkable. The anxious, toiling man of labour, and the divine immersed in the care of a great parish, find that in daily prayer, offered together with

others, lies a real refreshment for all anxieties and busy cares. Many students of the lives of eminent saints have borne witness to the advantage gained from intimate acquaintance with the thoughts and ways of men placed in circumstances entirely different from their own. Such volumes as those in which the late Sir James Stephen threw light upon the characters of men differing so widely from each other as Hildebrand and Richard Baxter, St. Francis of Assisi and William Wilberforce, create within the soul a real recognition of the element common to these remarkable characters. A great French historian left it on record that the lives of saints, mingled too often with fable and legend, were the only light of the ages, rightly on the whole called dark.

It is a delightful and instructive task to discover the true life of the soul, in detached sentences and chance expressions, such as may be found in the meditations of Anselm or the thoughts of Payson. The personal love for a crucified, risen, and ascended Redeemer, burns

as strongly in the expressions of the austere and unselfish Archbishop as in the fragmentary thoughts of the hard-worked pastor of modern days. The sustaining spirit of the effort to subdue circumstances and control untoward events, is felt to consist in the perfect reliance on Divine promise, which forms so distinct a characteristic in lives so very different. The power which sees God in everything, and acknowledges a Divine order in the disposition of ordinary affairs, so evident in the life of a statesman, fired with zeal for a noble cause, like William Wilberforce, is reflected in the dull routine of the life spent in an old French chateau, where nearness to God was daily sought by Eugènie de Guérin.

It is the distinguishing wish to order life according to the rule of God which impresses on the imagination and affections a true image of a real seeker after God, and enables a reader to mark with instinct all that may be wisely followed, or even imitated by others. The attempt at mere imitation or reproduction

of men such as Charles Kingsley or George Augustus Selwyn. He who would desire true spiritual enjoyment from this delightful study should strive to mould his taste after no formal or narrow-minded rule, but endeavour eagerly to find by his own individual effort the true and permanent element in the lives of wise and holy saints, the intense desire to live unspotted from the world, by which, not without effort and painful struggle, the Divine Life is obtained.

there may be fewer differences and a larger love.

It is difficult to give any rules beyond those which the experience of ordinary readers can easily suggest. It is well, however, to remember in the case of one whose life has been frequently written, to select the biography generally esteemed the best. It is well, too, to have some favourite life, and to make it a real and individual study; to illustrate the life of one who has written by some of his own productions, for thus we gather a fuller and often truer idea of the man in his daily life and conversation. How helpful, for instance, is it, after reading the life of the saintly Bishop Wilson, to turn to his sermons, his Maxims, his Sacra Privata; to bathe in the Christian Year after dwelling on the pastoral labours of Keble; and to turn to the school-sermons of Arnold when we have re-perused the story of his life and work.

A whole mine of thought may be drawn from the writings and life of John Foster, the gloomy but profound thinker, and the varied experiences words, spoken by our Lord on the night on which He was betrayed, is one of the great endeavours after the Christian life. task in which the soul in earnest never tires. and never feels that the goal has been reached. This result is natural, when we remember that beyond all controversy one great object was to suggest a perpetual memory of the benefit conferred upon the Church as a society, and every one of its members individually. The Apostles of the Lord must have connected the Feast of Love with the traditions gathered by fourteen hundred years around the Passover. The real meaning of the Passover must have been in their minds more fully disclosed when they remembered the perfect and complete deliverance wrought by Him who was called by St. Paul "our Passover."

Those who had continued with our Lord in His temptations, after each participation in Holy Communion, must have felt their knowledge of Christ enlarged, and known that in the solemn hour of celebration they were even nearer Him than at other times. The great importance of the Sacramental ordinance is indeed witnessed by the fact that a special revelation as to the Institution was made to the great Apostle of the nations. He needed the aid and strength imparted by such a special blessing to supply, it may be, the deep personal strengthenings given during the great Forty Days to his brethren, who had been called to their Master's side from their fishing nets and worldly occupations. The experience of the Apostles, enriched and deepened by the knowledge of the benefit conferred on the converts to the faith by the use of the Sacrament, must have led them gradually to a truer realisation of the office which the Communion was to hold in the Church of Christ. It may well be, then, that the lesson taught in a few years to inspired men may require many centuries of strife before it has fixed itself fully as an aid to the Divine Life. From the beginning men have ever been striving to make religion a thing apart. The Sacrament of Holy Communion, while it has had special

lessons and teachings of its own, was intended to impart a consecration and dignity to every act and every thought.

It is requisite, then, that those who desire to receive the full benefits of all that Christ meant to give should dwell continually on the simple record of the first institution of the Sacrament. Really devout souls shrink from questions concerning the manner of Christ's presence. They are content to know that beyond the manner and measure of His especial presence "whereever two or three are gathered together in His Name," He is wonderfully and supernaturally present with, and known unto, His people in the breaking of bread: does then and there, by a spiritual communication of Himself, fulfil His own words: "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." What the words of our Lord-the words of spirit and life-really meant to those who first heard them from the lips of St. John or St. Paul, we may be sure they are capable of meaning to believers in Christ at the present time. In one of

the documents adopted at the Reformation, still in use, it is said that "the worthy receivers of the Lord's Supper are, not after a corporal or carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of His Body and Blood, with all His benefits to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace."

These simple and touching expressions indicate a desire on the part of those who first put them together to seek after peace, and the things that belong unto peace, in the celebration of the Holy Communion. An effort ought always to be made, when we try to transport ourselves to the simple modes of worship in the early days of Christianity, to realise the effect of this message of peace to men who had failed to find in Jewish rites or heathen sacrifices quiet and rest for the soul. The Sacrament proclaims the will of Christ to raise into actual union with Himself every member of the human family who is anxiously bearing the burden of sin. The bread and wine are delivered to each individual believer, to remind him that he is not alone, but is one of a great family to be quickened by the Divine Life.

We cannot tell what the exact method of the earliest services for Holy Communion consisted in, but as is most probable the Song of the Angels at the birth of Christ was sung at the conclusion of the Sacrament, there would be then a distinct remembrance to every faithful partaker of the double nature of his relation to Christ, the soul alone with the Saviour, the soul in union with the faithful living and departed. It is the glory of the Holy Communion to preserve for us this sense of integrity and completeness in Christ. At the moment when, by special effort of faith and repentance, we own our evil behaviour, we gain strength and life, and feel that there is for us an inheritance common to all who believe in the message of the Gospel. Thus, as has been well said, "we confess a unity which is beneath all other unity, a deep eternal mystery of reconciliation and peace, which shall overcome the mystery of division and evil once and for ever."

It is the duty, then, of every one who seeks to derive a real personal strength and comfort from partaking in Holy Communion, to dwell in his preparation especially upon the manifestation of love made in the original institution. sacrifice of Christ-full, perfect, and complete, for the sins of all mankind-can never be repeated. This all men in their wisest and best Unfortunately, the permoments confess. versions which from time to time have gathered round the Sacrifice of the Cross have prevented many devout persons from connecting the Holy Communion with the offering upon Calvary. The word Sacrifice has often been misunderstood, and it is well on all accounts to be most careful in guarding human language against anything which may seem to favour an undue exaltation of the highest act of worship. When all is rightly done according to Christ's own appointment, we may truly say that the Sacrifice of Christ is in the Holy Communion applied "by such means as God has appointed." We do in simple obedience to Christ's own words show forth the Lord's death till He come, and we do well to remember, according to the words of one who was the very representative of those who desire to cling closely to the teaching of Holy Scripture—the late Dean Goode—that "it is strictly true, in a sense, that the real Sacrifice of the Cross, the true Body and Blood of Christ, are offered up in the Eucharist, not by iteration, but in the prayers of the faithful; nay, more, remission of sins can only be obtained by the offering up of the true Sacrifice of the Cross."

As a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the Holy Communion contains all the features of the thank-offering or peace-offering. Those who partake of the offering dedicate themselves anew, and believe that by acts of renewed self-surrender they approach the very presence of the Heavenly Father, and through the merits of the crucified Redeemer offer a real and true offering, in token of the mercies they have freely received.

Thus do we bear witness what our position is, and realise its privileges. Thus are we able to

gather into a single act of worship the thought of the life of faith, obedience, and love, to which the Son of God day by day calls us. All the highest and best feelings, all the recollections of mercies and renewals, all our thoughts of the dead and of the living, are sanctified and glorified when the soul, resting entirely in the finished work of Christ, discovers the blessedness of the truth that real rest and peace are only found by union with Him, who has shown that we are related to Him by offering for us the only sacrifice with which God can be satisfied. All our acts of praise and thanksgiving look back to the great Sacrifice of the Cross. The sacrifices of the Law looked forward to the event, whose blessed memory inspires deeds of sacrifice, acts of sacrifice, adoration, and praise. Christ in heaven pleads for us; we on earth trust that our offerings of praise are accepted through His unending intercession.

Most careful ought the preparation for Holy Communion to be on the part of those who feel deeply the unspeakable privilege of drawing

near to Christ. Sometimes it is to be feared that those who partake frequently of the benefits of Holy Communion fall into a neglect of preparation and meditation. The seeker after the Divine Life will do well to redouble effort in this direction. He will find a strange strength in the desire to gain a truer and nearer interest in the Divine love. The sense of forgiveness will be followed by a real growth in the spirit of forgive-A deeper and truer estimate of the ness. burden of sin leads to a higher and more awful comprehension of the perfectly loving will of the Son of God. These things are gained by strict methods of preparation for the reception of Holy Communion.

It is one of the most mysterious effects of frequent and faithful participation, that the spiritual presence of Christ with His people becomes more and more a part of the believer's real life. The feeling by which the Apostles of the Lord were led gradually to entertain higher notions of the nature and person of the Redeemer becomes our own; and like those, too,

who journeyed to Emmaus, our hearts burn within us, and we recognise the real meaning of the words, "Abide in me, and I in vou." The Holy Communion, it must not be forgotten, is not only a source of strength to the individual believer, a solemn memory and representation of the Sacrifice of the Cross, a Eucharist of praise and thanksgiving, but the great ingathering of the faithful people, a means of communion between all who acknowledge the abiding power of membership in one family. Doubtless there are many who value all that is implied under the name of the Heavenly Fatherhood, who do not yet realise the power of Holy Communion in confirming their membership in one family, and their obligation to fulfil the law of Christ.

Perseverance in the use—the frequent use—of Holy Communion does undoubtedly tend to foster the sense of living membership among all true-hearted children of the Cross. The gift of eternal life is what all men in earnest about the work of salvation really desire. There is com-

fort in knowing that among those who come partake with us of the grace of Christ, there may be many who are tried as we are tried, and a longing to enjoy more of the fulness of the li hid with Christ in God. We have no especi portion which all who are partakers in common humanity may not equally claim. The gift of life contains a promise for the kingdor and for all mankind. When we have receive the tokens of our Lord's Body and Blood v can utter the words, "Our Father," with a deet thankfulness that we are not alone, but are ver members of the mystical body of Christ.

Nothing, perhaps, weans the soul so con pletely from narrow isolation as the remen brance of what Christ has granted as an inher tance for all mankind; and the aspect of Ho Communion, viewed as the band betwee members of a family, has a wonderful effect quickening Divine Life within the soul. No must it be forgotten that there is or ought to a reconciliation between rich and poor, betwee high and low, in this common Feast. It is we

to remember, according to the words of a remarkable thinker, "that reason, and reflection, and education, and the experience of age, and the force of manly sense, are not the links which bind us to the communion of the body of Christ. It is rather to those qualities which we have, or may have, in common with our fellow-men, that the Gospel is promised. It is not with the strongminded, the resolute, the consistent, but with the weak, the poor, the babes in Christ, that we shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

The presence of the Divine Life, often truly felt within the soul after a solemn and special renewal of vows and surrender of self, does not end in feelings preternaturally excited and sustained. It leads to acts of mercy, words of forbearance, conquests over inferior appetites; and, above all, "profound submission to the will of God, and great deadness towards the glory of the world and applause of men." These are the true ornaments of the Christian life. They who possess them, walking in freedom, find the service of Christ a perpetual

joy. Every participation of Holy Cc deepens the desire to give to God the really within our reach—ourselves.

The life of the Divine Head of the thus reflected in the feebler, yet hu faithful, imitation of Christ. If it "What security can I have that Christ in me, and preserve me from sinking state of true assurance?" it may be answer, that the Holy Communion it to all who still tremble lest they should their Lord the comfort of knowing th all the varieties of human charac working by love, using diligently tl of grace within the reach of all, br by the hand into the presence of Chi temptation to stray has come upon Humility and simplicity have never to find that trust in the living God wh gains for man all that he needs. So separating life from religion, the H munion, humbly and devoutly used, found to act as a sanctifying and cor

influence in the troubled existence of those most engaged in worldly affairs. The same power which imparts through bread and wine a spiritual refreshment and strength is felt as a purifying force in the daily events of family life; nay, even in innocent pleasures freely granted to the children of God. Underneath the outward signs and tokens lies the love of God, manifested in the death of Christ. "One sacrifice-the sacrifice of God Himself-has been made once for all. He who has offered it is the mediator between you and God. You can only know what God's mind and will is towards you and all men when you behold it in His acts, His sufferings. These tell you that there is an unchangeable Friend, an eternal High Priest, in whom the Creator and creature are for ever atoned."

When the Holy Communion has brought us once more meek and humble, penitent and yet rejoicing, to the foot of the Cross of Christ, we then completely recognise what it has done and will do for men. It becomes the aid to the Divine Life, which gathers into itself the prayers of the still hour, the devout musings on Holy Writ, the anxious searchings of a conscience, the meditation on high and holy themes, the desire to submit and to receive, to manifest the power of God and not our own selfish pride, to be servants and scholars in the school where Christ is the Lord and Master for time and for eternity.

### THE DIVINE LIFE.

It will be seen from the preceding pages that it is in the diligent use of what we called the ordinary means of Grace real aids to the Divine Life are for the most part found. It is not, however, intended to disparage or undervalue aids which individuals may discover for themselves, or which have the approval and sanction of communities. A holy man, in an anxious age of the Church, has recorded his belief that Christians would be gainers of unspeakable benefits could they only overcome the natural shrinking many feel from speaking to

Other persons of the troubled aspirations of spiritual life. Undoubtedly many have often received a strange and unearthly impulse from the words of the preacher or the kindly utterance of the true friend in the time of sorrow The power of preaching is, perhaps, greater now than it ever has been. No mistake is more fatal than to believe that the highest and truest impulses may not often be traced more directly to the earnest words of a preacher than to the individual efforts of the soul in prayer and self-examination. It must not, therefore, be inferred that the power of preaching has been forgotten because no mention of it has been made as a direct aid to the Divine Life. The object has been to dwell rather on the aids which may be used by those who may be beyond the reach of earnest preaching, or situated where they cannot avail themselves of it.

A delightful and most instructive aid to spiritual life is within the reach of those who have access to some teacher and servant of

### HUART CHORDS.

ი

Inrist, who from the rich stores of his own personal experience delights to impart to others the sense of precious communion he enjoys with Thrist. Often indeed does the memory of such a teacher reproduce within us a kindling and animating enthusiasm. He may have gone into the shent land and joined the company of the marinful departed, but his look, his gesture. his deligit in all things good and true, his harred of impurity and evil, his warning words of cave and tenderness, are with us still. There is in inginer pleasure on earth than the fellowsin; with a truly great soul. He who has errored the comfort and blessing of friendship with one win lived above the world, and who delighted to express his feelings when there was no possibility of misconception and confusion, has indeed possessed an aid towards the Divine Life altogether incapable of being expressed in human language. Yet it is not too much to say that this high state of personal exultation is attainable by those who have really felt within them the constraining power

## M: 4.

exercise: or -Chris. It is a mine. while we ---it is Him w. have not a ... are word. .... have bear has been on instance explai... spring. him a feet himse:: realists . men: ( ; case of process. Tirr . who ieall conserve Cirrist.  $\mathsf{bein}_{\mathcal{L}(S_{\mathbb{C}_{+}})}$ Share .. . . .

after struggle and anguish. All great efforts for the conversion of the heathen, and the rescue of the fallen, have for the most part had their origin in the desires of some faithful servants of Christ to shed abroad the light that has penetrated the darkness of their souls. Whatever, therefore, leads men away from contemplation of their own condition to effort for the brethren is an indirect aid towards the Divine Thus is the Christian contest made Life. complete. One effort to help others begets definite and habitual acts of prayer and selfdenial and meditation. A true unity felt in the soul is evident in the outward life. Happiness in the highest and noblest sense of the word becomes our own, even though we are not consciously seeking it. When we renounce all desires for personal and selfish success we become really one with Him whose meat was to do his Father's will.

As it is true that in the intercourse with great and faithful souls we find a most powerful aid to the Divine Life, so from the perusal of the

thoughts and writings of men who have made spiritual life a study an inestimable benefit may be gained. Here, indeed, we have access to counsellors who are always ready to welcome us, always ready to distribute their stores of teaching. Indeed, at the present time, when books abound, the place and value once possessed by preaching seem to belong to the devotional writings, which it is not too much to say ought to be well known to all who have leisure and opportunity in the pursuit of truth and holiness.

There is a danger in reading too many books upon this subject. It is better, perhaps, to select, after due deliberation, one book which may serve as a manual, and to which we can return constantly. Few who have really studied the "Imitation of Christ," the "Saint's Rest," the "Pilgrim's Progress," the special treatises of Taylor and Leighton, the poems of Herbert and Keble, and to these may be added the "Thoughts of Pascal," and the "Letters of Fénélon," have neglected to use these treasures

of thought in after days as direct aids to the Divine Life.

In so vast and extensive a field it is difficult to give advice adapted for all. He who sets himself in earnest to the task of choosing a few helpful manuals will select those seemingly fitted for his own condition, and it is well to remember that the responsibility of a good or bad choice in reading is laid emphatically upon us as a part of our trial and discipline. Too many readers are at the mercy of friends or the recommendations of writers in this matter, and there are morbid and unhealthy works, not proceeding from one class of Christian believers, which may produce an excitement utterly destructive to the real progress of life within the soul.

If the time that can be given to reading is necessarily brief, it is well to select a volume which may give us after our daily Bible reading a few brief thoughts often felt to be a true shment in the toil and bustle of the day.

Lee has often a strange power to arrest the

wagrant spirit, and recall it to a sense of life and duty.

Those who have tried the delightful experiment of reading a few verses from a well-known sacred poet will find that the light of his intellect and love has shed a glory on the path of common day. In all that has been said it has been assumed that certain great truths concerning our life in the Son of God lie at the foundation of faith and practice. A devout writer has well said "that the true spiritual life of the creature is a life unto God;" indeed, the whole passage which follows these words from the late Charles Marriott's "Reflections on the Epistle to the Romans" so fully expresses what it has been the humble aim of these pages to show forth, that it may be well to extract it in full :--

"A creature that is not capable of such a life is of another order than one which is. To command whole worlds were less than to have such a knowledge of God as may be possessed by a beggar or a child; and any one who has once felt what it is to have communion with his Maker would feel that to take that power from him would be to degrade him to the level perchance below the level, of the beasts tha perish. It would make his life such as could not be truly called life, since he would be a dead to the source of all life. His thought would be of things below him, or of being outwardly like himself, but of whose inmost and deepest life he would have no notion. would be to him but a principle of motion and sensation, not a conscious abiding in the Eternal." There must be in the heart before the search for the Divine Life is truly com menced a firm persuasion that there is sucl a thing as knowledge of God, and that we are not pursuing a phantom or a shade.

Nothing has of late years done more mischie to the real growth of spiritual life than the attempt to cast doubt and uncertainty upon the character of man's knowledge of revealed truth Doubtless some have believed that by representing the attributes of God as altogether inscru

table, they were placing the creature in a true state of dependence and ignorance. The Gospel not only assumes but declares that there is a knowledge of God within the reach of man, even on earth. The Gospel "requires a new creature, a Divine nature, Christ formed within us; but then it bestows a quickening spirit, an enlivening power, to enable us to perform that which is required of us." The true knowledge of Christ is seen in the desire to keep His commandments. The Apostle tells us that the profession of knowledge without such attempt is vain. "He that saith I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." There are times when the spirit, subdued by the recollection of past sin, almost turns in despair from an endeavour after the Divine Life, and the temptation entirely to abandon effort is felt to be overpowering. Yet this may be the very moment when a real recovery may be possible, if only we strive to keep before us "the image of God in righteousness and true holiness" shaped in our hearts.

We know that it is the will of God that a the followers of His Son should strive after life of faith, not of sight; and we must no suffer any doubt or misgiving as to the intentio of our Heavenly Father to deprive us of th conviction that, if we have a personal desire t be like Christ, we shall be enabled to maintai an anxious search after the holiness which i essential to spiritual life. It is most importar to cherish all aspirations after the life of faith A temporary relapse into carelessness must no be permitted to obliterate the inward desire for a real indwelling of Christ in the soul. Tw things must be constantly remembered-wha He has done for us; what He requires us to d for Him.

Well has it been said by Cudworth that "th great mystery of the Gospel does not lie i Christ without us only (though we must know also what He has done for us); but the ver pith and kernel of it consists in Christ inwardl found in our hearts."

In the special treatises concerning the Divin

Life, which have been in circulation in this and in other countries, it is always insisted that no real progress can be made unless it is first remembered that the rest, which is promised by the Saviour, is not a possession we gain for ourselves, but a gift imparted from above. This is true; but there is, if we may use the expression, another rest, the portion of those who submit to the voke of Christ. "The two rests" are, as it has been well said, "identical: they are the inseparable parts of one perfect and blessed whole." To acquiesce simply in the reception of a grace conferring rest and peace has sometimes led to a misleading mysticism. At one time there was a danger lest a teaching arising out of this condition of mind should create indifference to the importance of practical exertions for the benefit of others. Those who make a study of holiness would do well to remember the benefit to be derived from concentrating our charity and our prayers upon some particular work of charity or mercy, some special portion of the mission-field, or, it may be, the spiritual welfare of one near and dear to us, for whose soul's health we make specia effort and special prayer.

Faith in God, and the reconciliation effected by Christ, is the fundamental motive of all act of virtue and self-sacrifice. The writings of those who seem to rest the perfection of the Christian life upon an absolute submission to the Divine will must be used with caution unless there be also a direct inculcation of active charity and constant benevolence. Even in the "Holy Living" of Jeremy Taylor, the experienced reader may detect a want of reference to the highest and truest form of faith as the source of all virtuous excellence. In the spirit ual life, as in the world of intellect, real progress is most surely attained when the mind i not distracted by a variety of efforts.

A master in the art of counsel to others ha well said, "it is profitable that every one should choose a particular exercise of Christian virtue not to abandon the rest, but to keep his mind in a more settled order and employment." It may

seem to some that there is a certain selfishness in a time of distraction and doubt, when persons retire from the discussion of many of the questions which now perplex the minds of Christians, and from enquiries concerning the grounds of belief, to the cultivation of the Divine Life. But it may be asked, how can we better prepare for the conflict which seems to be impending over Christendom than by resolving to act out the spirit of the commands, which certainly aim at making us better men. Those who are in earnest about spiritual life insist constantly on the truth that there can be no real knowledge without obedience. All religious persons confess that truth depends greatly on the moral purity and faithful lives of those who seek it. It will be no bad preparation for a time when we shall have to give account of the reasons of our faith, to have lived very near to God in a close desire to attain holiness.

Very few persons in a generation are called or fitted to undertake the duty of examining the various doubts and criticisms continually assailing the integrity of truth. It is a grave misfortune that, owing to the freedom of the press, difficulties are often presented to minds wholly unfitted to attempt the task of solution. We may have within us an absolute conviction that the victory of truth will be sure in the end, and vet experience great unsettlement when we come into the presence of a sceptic. can be no doubt as to the advantage possessed at such a time by those who have been earnestly intent on attaining a higher spiritual life. the attempt has been pure and high, we shall have gained a spiritual instinct which will often enable us to cast aside doubts and suggestions as to the nature and effect of the faith upon the lives and thoughts of men.

Seekers after Divine Life are exposed to two dangers. They may fall into formalism, or they may let their higher feelings evaporate in a mystical affectation of thought and speech. Meditation on the great topics of the faith is a most invaluable corrective of such tendencies. He, for instance, who has subdued his

thoughts by the discipline afforded by the perusal of such a book as "The Thoughts of Pascal" has armed himself with a weapon which will do him good service in the presence of mischief and error. The comfort and peace which are the undoubted result of anxious struggles after spiritual life, while they are not to be looked upon as the ultimate object of our work, must not be undervalued.

There is a strange and absorbing interest gathered from the consideration of great truths which seems to sweep away all mean and petty objects, and admit us to a knowledge of the realities and certainties of Eternal Life. An enthusiasm for all that is noble and attractive in human character insensibly becomes a portion of our being when we are consciously bent upon the attainment of true knowledge. The miserable vanity of all merely earthly pursuits becomes evident by degrees to those who are dwelling constantly in mental prayer and solemn meditation on the Life of Christ. It is to that Life that the real seeker after holiness

will constantly turn, for its meaning is inexhaustible, and the counsels it supplies are found to be priceless. As we come closer to Christ through the constant use of those aids which promote Divine Life within us, we shall never be tempted to forget in the work of the world the relation we stand in to His Father and our God.

The saints of the Old Testament walked with God and enjoyed His presence. From their lives and words we gather a true feeling of the communion which we enjoy with them, and are often able to adapt particular passages in their lives to our own needs in very different circumstances. But we do not draw from them that intense consciousness that we are in the presence of One who "combined with the sternest reason the deepest love," as when we join in spirit the multitude that listened to the words spoken with authority, and not as the scribes.

We learn from the life of Christ how the spirit of His teaching can be carried into the highest as well as into the lowest sphere of

mortal action. He has said to all, "Be perfect," and it is from Him that we derive authority to declare that there is such a thing as the Divine Life, that there is a way which leads from all that is mean and trivial to all that is high and pure. The world would indeed be different if there were more who set themselves diligently to live above the world, although their lot is cast in it; to seek the only pleasures that never tire, the only comfort which is always new.

It has been well remarked that the character and life of our dear Redeemer and Lord has had a special impression suited to the want and comprehension of particular ages in the Church.

Thus at one time men saw in Him the Prophet of the human family, and the Healer of the nations; others, at another period, looked upon Him as the great Exemplar of all true renunciation; others as the One reformer of what was ready to decay, and as the type of all virtuous manliness. But no enumeration of all the qualities men most prize and value can exhaust the meanings and teachings of the Lice

of Christ. He who has known Him to be his own Physician and Saviour is the first to feel how inadequate human language is to express the loyalty and love called into existence by nearness to His presence. It may be reserved, perhaps, in these days for those who are really truly seeking the Divine Life to find that the words, "The Imitation of Christ," speak more and more as years advance of the need for absolute self-surrender, and that leavening of life with religion, which adds a glory to the highest station, and imparts a dignity to the lowest and humblest lot in life. We may have yet more and more to learn of the real meaning of the words which are "spirit and life."

There is a true development in doctrine and practice, a dispensation of grace even to those who believe, and believe rightly, that the faith was "once delivered to the saints." Men do not see the complete perfections of Christ all at once. "Even yet will He far exceed." The reality is far greater than our feeble conceptions can frame. One great glory and privilege

within the reach of all who are subject to Divine influences is that increasing experiences and true perseverance gradually admit all who long for light to that change which is spoken of in the words of the Apostle: "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

What remains now but, in conclusion, to plead for that increase of Spiritual Life, which, by pouring true spirit into old forms, has so often since the Christian Church existed made old things new? On every side we see evidences of a desire to make religion more of a force in the world than it is. Genuine improvement must always begin with the individual.

It has been endeavoured in these imperfect pages to show that all effort after Divine Life is not really selfish, but that he who strives to secure his own individual peace must, if he is true to our blessed Lord's commands and to the law of His kingdom, never forget his brotherhood with mankind—his common joys, hopes, and fears. It has, perhaps, been rightly imputed as a fault to some works written on spiritual growth that they isolate believers too much, and dwell too prominently upon the pleasures of solitary communion with God.

The life of the true seeker after truth should begin in worship and end in service. That life indeed is happiest which combines both. If a real desire after plain living and high thinking took possession even of a few in a nation, a change of habit and taste would soon appear if the effort were constant. So, too, is it with the Divine Life. If a few young people, at the time when life is opening out to them, joined together in a simple effort to carry out into daily life such counsels as have been here feebly delivered, true changes in character would be effected, and new pleasures added to life.

The practice of retirement from the world for a brief season, in company with others, has been found by some to create new and devout affections in the soul. Every true believer

has a retirement always within his own reach, always within his own grasp. The mystery of mysteries is found in that strange power of withdrawal from the things that are seen to the things that are unseen, possible through prayer, through meditation, through communion with God in the use of sacraments and worship. Those who have not yet enjoyed such a withdrawal have not experienced the blessedness of true happiness.

The love of the Redeemer—the pure disinterested love which delights in the very presence of One who is the source of the true joys of the soul—exercises a strange power in the world. It inspires with animation and attractiveness the characters of men and women about whose lives of purity and self-sacrifice there is happily no controversy. A taste for Divine Truth produces in the life of one who knows its power a gentle tolerance for the faults and imperfections of others, and a forbearance from evil, which makes many who are doubtful turn lovingly to the Truth.

### 118 HEART CHORDS.

In most cases the pursuit of the Divine Life induces a special tenderness towards the faults of our brethren, and enlarges our power of supplication for all mankind. The spirit, indeed, which breathed in the life of the saintly Hammond becomes natural to those who know what the blessedness of communion with God in Christ Jesus our Lord is. Those who are not acquainted with the striking passage in Fell's life will be glad to read it:—

"The charity and extent of his prayer was as exuberant as the zeal and fervour. He thought it very unreasonable that our intercessions should not be as universal as our Saviour's redemption was; and would complain of that thrift and narrowness of mind to which we are so prone, confining our care either to ourselves or relatives, or at most, to those little angles of the world that more immediately concerned us, and which on due account bear very low proportions to the whole. There was no emergent distress, however remote, but it enlarged his litany."

It would be a great privilege to be the means of inducing any who are anxious about Divine Life, and the methods of acquiring it, to adopt the use of such aids as might conduce to such a frame of mind as this. The counsels given here may seem to some commonplace, and to others hardly suitable for those who have reached an advanced stage of spiritual growth. It is, however, the belief of the writer, that among the busy and hard-worked there are many striving souls who will not turn away from words which remind them of the wondrous power and strength they may derive from a diligent use of ordinary aids to the Divine Life.

It has been said that the leading characteristic of the wonderful allegory which has so impressed English religious life is its inculcation of watchful and wary walking at every step. This is, indeed, the sum and substance of every exhortation to spiritual growth contained in the writings of those who have made it a special study. We cannot hope on this side of the grave to reach a perfect complacency, a perfect

rest; but as the journey draws towards; and we see before us the lights of the City, we may feel that the sustaining which has supported us is no delusion, life which has emanated from Him w said of Himself, "I am the Way, the and the Life."

# CASSELL. PETTER, GALPIN & CO.'S PUBLICATIONS.

The Early Days of Christianity.

By the Rev. Canon FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S.

8th Thousand. Two Vols., demy 8vo, 24s.

(Can be also had in morocco binding.)

The Life and Work of St. Paul. By the Rev. Canon FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S. 19th Thousand. In Two Vols., demy 8vo, cloth, 24s.; morocco, £2 2s.

The Life of Christ. By the Rev. Canon FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S. Library Edition. 29th Edition. Complete in Two Volumes, cloth, 24s.; morocco, £2 2s. Popular Edition, in One Vol., cloth, 6s.; cloth, gilt edges, 7s. 6d.; Persian morocco, 10s. 6d. Illustrated Edition, extra crown 4to, cloth, gilt edges, 21s.; morocco, £2 2s.

An Old Testament Commentary for English Readers. Edited by the Right Rev. C. J. ELLICOTT, D.D., Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. To be completed in Five Vols., price 21s. each.

A New Testament Commentary for English Readers. Edited by C. J. ELLICOTT, D.D., Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. Complete in Three Vols., price 21s. each.

"Heart Chords." A Series of Works by Eminent Divines. Bound in cloth, red edges, 1s. each.

Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., London.

#### Selections from

Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co.'s Publications (continued).

- A Commentary on the Revised Version of the New Testament for English Readers. By the Rev. W. G. Humphry, B.D., Member of the Company of Revisers of the New Testament. Crown 8vo, price 7s. 6d.
- The Family Bible. With 900 ILLUSTRATIONS, References, Concordance, Critical and Explanatory Notes, &c. Printed on Fine Toned Paper, leather, gilt edges, £2 10s.; morocco, £3 10s.; best morocco, £3 15s.
- The Illustrated Bible. With 900 ILLUSTRATIONS. Royal 4to, 1,476 pages. Bound in Persian morocco or leather, with corners and clasps.
- The Half-Guinea Illustrated Bible. With 900 Original ILLUSTRATIONS. With References, &c. &c. 1,248 pages, crown 4t0, cloth, 105. 6d. Can be also had in Leather Bindings in great variety, specially suitable for presentation.
- The Child's Life of Christ. Complete in one handsome Volume, with about 300 Original ILLUSTRATIONS. Cloth gilt, gilt edges, 21s.
- The Child's Bible. With 200 ILLUSTRATIONS, especially designed for Children. Being a Selection from the Holy Bible, in the Words of the Authorised Version. Cloth, gilt edges, £1 is.; Cheap Edition, small 4to, 7s. 6d.

Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., London.

### Selections from

Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co.'s Publications (continued).

- The Bible Dictionary. With nearly 600 ILLUSTRATIONS. Complete in One Vol., Cheap Edition, cloth, 7s. 6d.
- The Bible Educator. Edited by the Very Rev. E. H. PLUMPTRE, D.D., containing about 400 Illustrations and Maps. Complete in Four Vols., cloth, 6s. each; or Two Double Vols., cloth, 21s.; or in library binding, 24s.
- Companion to the Revised Version of the English New Testament. By Prof. ALEXANDER ROBERTS, D.D., Member of the New Testament Company. 2s. 6d.
- Family Prayers. Prepared by a Committee of the Upper House of Convocation of the Province of Canterbury, and published by Authority of the House. Cloth, 1s.
- Keble's Christian Year. With ILLUSTRA-TIONS. Cloth, 7s. 6d.; cloth, gilt edges, 10s. 6d.
- The Marriage Ring. A Gift-Book for the Newly Married and for those Contemplating Marriage. By WILLIAM LANDELS, D.D. Royal 16mo, white leatherette, gilt edges, in box, 6s.
- The Quiver. An Illustrated Magazine for Sunday Reading. Yearly Volumes, 7s. 6d.; also Monthly Parts, 6d.

Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., London.

#### Selections from

- Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co.'s Publications (continued).
- St. George for England; and other Sermons preached to Children. By the Rev. T. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE, M.A. Third Edition. Cloth, gilt, 5s.
- The Patriarchs. By the late Rev. W. HANNA, D.D., and the Ven. Archdeacon NORRIS, B.D. With Coloured Map. Cheap Edition. 2s. 6d.
- The History of the English Bible. By the Rev. W. F. MOULTON, M.A., D.D. Cheap Edition. Cloth gilt, 2s. 6d.
- Flowers from the Garden of God.

  A Book for Children. By the Rev. GORDON CALTHROP, M.A. Cloth gilt, 2s. 6d.
- Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. With 100 ILLUSTRATIONS. Cloth, 7s. 6d.; cloth, gilt edges, 10s. 6d.
- Bunyan's Holy War. With 100 ILLUSTRATIONS. Cloth, 7s. 6d.; cloth, gilt edges, 10s. 6d.
- Shall We Know One Another? By the Rt. Rev. J. C. RYLE, Lord Bishop of Liverpool. Netw and Enlarged Edition. 18.
- The Voice of Time. By John Stroud. New and Enlarged Edition. Gilt edges, is.
- CASSELL, PETTER, CALPIN & CO.'S COMPLETE CATALOGUE, containing a List of Several Hundred Volumes, inclusing Bibles and Retigious Works, Fine Art Volumes, Children's Books, Dictionaries, Educational Works, Handbooks and Guides, History, Natural History, Household and Domestic Treatises, Science, Serials, Travels, &r. &c., sent post free on application to

Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., Ludgate Hill, London.







